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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 22 April 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria)

- General exchange of views (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS (continued)

Mr. JANDL (Austria): The Disarmament Commission is meeting for its 1991 substantive session at an extremely crucial moment. The attention of world public opinion is currently focused on the events taking place in Iraq, in particular with regard to the situation and plight of the Kurdish population, which has over the years and the decades suffered so much and which unfortunately still continues to suffer. We watch the events in the northern and the southern parts of Iraq after having witnessed the unfolding and development of one of the most severe and painful crises in recent history, a crisis that was started on 2 August 1990 by the aggression of Iraq against Kuwait. This is certainly not the place to dwell exhaustively on the history, the political aspects or the possible future developments of Iraq's actions and the response by the international community. But let me say a few words about the impact of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis and its aftermath on disarmament and international security.

During the last session of the General Assembly my delegation offered some thoughts in that connection, and I should now like to amplify them a bit in the light of the developments since last fall.

First, I believe the events have shown that our world has become smaller and that the continents have come closer to one another. Events in one corner of the globe profoundly affect other regions even if they are geographically very far away. The old saying that peace and international security are indivisible has taken on a new meaning: if one region of the world is facing severe tensions and conflicts, other regions are immediately and deeply affected as well.

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Secondly, it has become even more evident that there is a link and an interrelationship between international security on the one hand and political and economic stability on the other hand. Yet that interaction reaches further and, as clearly demonstrated by burning oil fields or by the plight of the Iraqi Kurds, also comprises the environment and human rights. It would therefore be a major mistake for us to attempt to address the various problems in a fragmented manner. That holds true in particular for the already connected fields of disarmament and international security. The First Committee, for example, still examines questions of disarmament and those of international security separately. My delegation believes that this division is an artificial one that ought to be overcome. We therefore feel encouraged by the fact that this Disarmament Commission session will deal with issues relating to both areas, as is clearly to be seen from the titles of most of our agenda items. We think that this is the right way, and we hope that such an integrated approach to the topics will dominate multilateral debate in the future.

We should perhaps also begin to understand the term "multilateral", so common in the United Nations, in a new sense: since the word itself, which comes from the Latin language, means "many sides", it should be an encouragement to take into account the various, even the many sides of the issues before us.

The third conclusion I would like to draw from the Gulf crisis is that the questions of regional disarmament efforts and of regional security issues are of the utmost importance and have to be looked at with high priority. Global security cannot be separated from regional security, and regional stability is the precondition, even the conditio sine qua non, for global stability. Efforts have to be pursued both on the regional and on the global

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levels. True, one has always to find the right approach. Questions of regional aspects might be dealt with in different ways by different bodies or with different short-term and medium-term perspectives. Furthermore, one cannot attempt to tackle questions pertaining to different regions in the same way. Concepts that work well on one continent do not necessarily fit into the conditions prevailing in other parts of the globe. Positive experiences in one region can form an example, but not always a pattern, for other regions. However, the solid basis for all these endeavours must be the conviction that subregional, regional and global aspects are deeply interrelated and that all pertinent efforts are to contribute to the achievement of an integrated and comprehensive status of security.

Addressing now questions that concern disarmament issues more directly, I would say that the fourth lesson to be learned is that problems of conventional disarmament and disarmament relating to weapons of mass destruction are closely interlinked. Arms reduction must be undertaken through coordinated and concerted efforts on both levels. Otherwise it will remain a patchwork and will not lead to the outcome we all desire, namely greater stability and more reliable security.

Related to what I have just said is the next, the fifth, thought. The extreme danger created by weapons of mass destruction has become even more obvious. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the relevant endeavours of the multilateral disarmament machinery soon lead to the desired result, namely finalization of the chemical weapons convention and a substantial improvement of the régime on biological weapons. Furthermore, we consider it essential that the nuclear non-proliferation system be strengthened and that all States put their nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

Sixthly, my delegation would draw the conclusion from the Gulf crisis that the heavy buildup of arms, in particular weapons of mass destruction, is no longer conducive to stabilizing international security. One has to admit that the philosophy of deterrence is an outdated concept that rather increases international tensions. The idea of deterrence should therefore be superseded by other more cooperative security concepts based on lower and steadily decreasing levels of weaponry. Some regions, whose security doctrines over the decades have been governed by huge stockpiles of arms, have started to rethink their philosophies and to engage in substantial disarmament endeavours. My delegation hopes that other regions will follow suit, of course according to their respective particular situations and conditions.

The seventh lesson to be learned is that under certain circumstances arms transfers can have extremely negative effects and can do severe damage to international security. Therefore, it seems highly to be recommended that multilateral forums should have an even closer look at the international trade and traffic in weapons. Austria feels encouraged by the efforts undertaken so far and hopes they will lead also to the establishment of an international register of arms transfers.

The eighth and final conclusion I want to mention in this context is that despite - or maybe precisely because of - the often celebrated new quality in international and multilateral relations we cannot complacently lean back and wait. There are problems so manifold, so complicated and so vital that we have to intensify our multilateral efforts to solve them in the interest of creating better conditions for mankind.

Let me turn now to the current substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. In the Chairman's introductory statement and in several statements by other delegations, there has already been reference to the

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paradigmatic importance of this session, which is working for the first time under the reforms contained in the well known paper "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission".

I shall therefore not dwell on those aspects. But I should like to offer some comments on the four items on our agenda.

The first item, "Objective information on military matters", is the only "old" item on our agenda. As members know, Austria had the privilege of presiding over the relevant consultations group at the 1990 session. Although according to a compromise reached the mandate of the group was limited in its scope and the issue had to be addressed only in a preliminary way, my delegation believes that a solid basis for this year's treatment of the item has been laid. The exchange of views on the subject took place last year in a frank and open manner and on an outstanding intellectual level, and it brought forward many extremely interesting ideas on the matter in general and on its various aspects.

My delegation feels that the outcome of last year's session can therefore be built upon and expanded, in particular because the item was already structured and because various aspects that can be further elaborated were already identified and commented upon. Furthermore, there have also been a number of concrete ideas and proposals on the future treatment of the item. In addition, two very interesting working papers have been submitted.

As regards the current session, we would greatly welcome the compilation of a substantial paper containing guidelines or sets of principles that reflect commonly acceptable positions.

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

We conceive objective information on military matters as an extremely useful confidence- and security-building measure. Such measures create first and foremost transparency. Thereby they help communicate the absence of feared threats, they provide reassurance by reducing uncertainties, and they constrain opportunities for exerting pressure through military activities. Hence they increase trust and confidence, decrease tensions and strengthen stability and security. Thus they are also conducive to disarmament.

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

My delegation believes that the term "matters" should include not only so-called static data, that is, data on capabilities, but also data on activities. Such information is not necessarily to be provided from the beginning. Perhaps a step-by-step expansion of a possible future information exchange system would be the right method. The final goal should, in our understanding, comprise as many aspects of information as possible, also including information on military doctrines and defence policies. The more information there is to be exchanged, the more stability and security will be enhanced. On the other hand, we are well aware of the restraints a possible future framework of information exchange can face. One could certainly think of particular regional and political situations that would not permit this confidence- and security-building measure. Therefore, my delegation believes that initially a regional approach might be promising, because it seems easier to share sensitive data first on a regional scale. In that context, the three regional centres for peace and disarmament in Lima, Lomé and Kathmandu could play a very useful role. Later on, one will also have to study what functions could be played by other United Nations bodies with a more global character. But to be quite frank, even if the exchange of objective information on military matters is an undertaking that cannot be started tomorrow with a global scope, it is absolutely worth while to begin now to identify parameters and to set up guidelines which can be implemented in a future step-by-step process.

It was often stressed that the most severe threat mankind is facing is the danger imposed by nuclear weapons and that it is therefore indispensable that the Commission, as the deliberative organ of the disarmament machinery, should also deal with the question of nuclear-arms reduction. Since 1979, the

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Commission has had an item on nuclear disarmament on its agenda. Unfortunately, and much to the regret of my delegation, it was not possible to arrive at a consensus document, although considerable effort was invested and delegations tried to the best of their ability to do so. In the light of the reforms adopted, it was decided to put aside the treatment of the old, very broad-based nuclear item and to look for new and more promising possibilities of tackling the question of nuclear disarmament.

The formulation of the nuclear item that is before us is therefore more concrete than the previous one: it stresses the relationship between nuclear disarmament and international peace and security and thereby draws a line to the interaction between various aspects of international relations, as I have mentioned. The title of the item itself demonstrates that nuclear disarmament is meaningful for the achievement and enhancement of stability and security, and that those goals cannot be viewed in isolation. Thus, the new item has introduced a new element in our deliberations which deserves our most careful attention. My delegation even thinks that the said interrelation will be of paradigmatic importance for the future treatment of other disarmament-related issues.

Equally important is the fact that the formulation of the item refers to the process of nuclear disarmament, thereby stressing the dynamic element which relates to the different stages of nuclear disarmament over time and which also implies a future-oriented assessment.

The third element in the wording of the title of the agenda item is a reference to the final goal of all relevant endeavours: the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Once again, the dynamic side of the problem is emphasized, and this should also give rise to some thoughts on future

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security concepts without nuclear arms. Thus, the formulation of the item is a working programme in itself. It will therefore be necessary to treat the item in a structured manner, first taking up rather narrow and well-defined aspects, and proceeding later to a more comprehensive approach.

Basically, we hope that it will be possible to arrive finally at a useful document on the matter, based on consensus. We think that this year could bring a fruitful general debate on the item in order to generate views and ideas. We hope that the relevant Working Group will then be able to proceed to the initial phases of the drafting exercise.

The third substantive item for the current session is entitled, "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security". My delegation is very glad that that item was put on the agenda, since we believe that it is a matter of utmost importance and of special significance for future disarmament and security efforts. It is one of the forward-looking subjects that, we hope, will dominate international debates in the years to come. We feel particularly happy that this item also stresses the integration of disarmament, on the one hand, and international security, on the other. Furthermore, the item gives rise to a thorough investigation of the vital relationship between efforts at the global and regional levels.

Being of the opinion that regional aspects of disarmament and security do have an essential impact on the global situation, Austria considers it absolutely necessary to deal with regional approaches in multilateral forums as well. Certainly, not every aspect of regional matters is of interest to a multilateral body. Some are better discussed in merely regional frameworks. However, it would be a great mistake to let regional aspects remain generally neglected in multilateral bodies, for comprehensive disarmament would then remain patchwork.

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

Many interesting ideas with regard to this agenda item have been put forward, relating both to the substance itself and to the role the various United Nations organs can play in that context. We are therefore confident that the discussions in Working Group III will entail a compilation of ideas and will lead to the elaboration of a document on that matter which will be of utmost usefulness with regard to future security concepts, in both regional and global terms.

In this context, I should like to mention briefly the recent United Nations Seminar on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures on a Regional Basis, which was held in Vienna last February. The discussions led to a fruitful exchange of views and sharing of experiences of different regions, which will certainly generate and stimulate interregional debate on disarmament and security issues.

"The role of science and techology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields" is the fourth and last of the substantive items. The Working Group on this topic will also deal with a matter that is completely new, that has not been taken up in the international disarmament machinery so far. At the same time, the issue involves many aspects that will gain increased importance in the future. This item, like the one on regional approaches, is therefore a forward-looking and future-oriented one. It also emphasizes the various forms and degrees of interaction between international security, on the one hand, and the aspects of international relations and cooperation, on the other.

The recent crisis, in particular, shed light on the Janus-faced character of the refinement of technology in the field of armaments and international security. The more advanced the weapons systems are, the more dangerous they

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are and the more damage they can inflict. Thus they decrease stability rather than increase it. But there is also another aspect: improved technology can also be used to enhance disarmament and stability, for example in the field of implementation and verification of disarmament agreements or in connection with the critical task of weapons disposal. One can further ask and investigate the question whether technological improvements of defensive weapons have a different impact than those of offensive ones. My delegation firmly believes that this dual aspect of the advancement of science and technology ought to be emphasized, studied and reflected in the work of Working Group IV.

The notion of "other related fields" in the formulation of the agenda item seems very promising to us. Some ideas have already been advanced, and it will be most interesting to examine them further. As international developments have shown, a great many aspects are integrated and have a bearing on one another. The deliberations in Working Group IV will provide us with opportunities to have a look at these correlations and to draw the necessary conclusions with regard to the strengthening of international security.

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As is the case with other items, my delegation hopes that this year's substantive session not only will produce an interesting exchange of views but also will mark the beginning of the drawing up of a recommendation or guideline on this matter.

I am afraid I have spoken at some length. Let me therefore just conclude by emphasizing once again the importance Austria attaches to the very important work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, particularly in the light of the reforms that will lead to more efficiency in, and a better outcome of, our meetings, and with regard to the most promising and forward-looking agenda items before us. Finally, I wish to pledge to the Chairmen of the four Working Groups the full support and active cooperation of the Austrian delegation.

Mr. MOUSSA (Egypt): It gives me great personal satisfaction to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this year's session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Your personal dynamism and extensive experience will undoubtedly make a very positive contribution to ensuring the success of our deliberations. I should also like to express our gratitude to Ambassador Nana Sutresna of Indonesia for the very competent way in which he guided our deliberations at the 1990 session.

This session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission has particular significance since this is the first time the Commission has been convened since the adoption of the reform programme entitled "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission" - a development that constitutes a much-needed impetus to the work of this body and provides prospects for the Commission to address a wider range of disarmament-related issues, with a view to enhancing further the attainment of the common and pressing goal of comprehensive disarmament.

(Mr. Moussa, Egypt)

On this occasion, the delegation of Egypt would like to reaffirm its sincere commitment to cooperating fully under the Chairman's competent guidance with the Bureau and the other members of the Disarmament Commission, with the aim of facilitating progress towards the achievement through dialogue of mutually agreeable processes for addressing outstanding issues. Over the years, Egypt has engaged actively in negotiations on all disarmament issues. I can confirm that - as will be demonstrated in this and other disarmament forums - we shall continue to pursue the same practice and to respond constructively to the concerns of all peace-loving States.

Despite some negative factors, as manifested in acts of aggression that have led to military conflicts, the important developments in international relations that we have all witnessed since the Commission's last session have had a resounding effect in creating a sense of optimism unparalleled at any time during the second half of this century. They have unlocked the gates on the road to the achievement of international peace, security and prosperity. They have also most certainly cast their benevolent shadow on the United Nations, which has been accorded new prominence and vitality, and have been manifested in the field of disarmament at an unprecedented pace. It is now our collective responsibility to strive in good faith to consolidate these achievements in an atmosphere of cooperation and accomodation, taking into account the legitimate interests of all States. We commend the substantial achievements that have been made possible by the new international climate in the field of bilateral nuclear and conventional disarmament, while, at the same time, we note that the pace of progress in this field has recently somewhat slowed - a phase that we certainly hope will be of limited duration. It is our opinion that these achievements, by their very nature, can only be

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considered a starting-point and a catapult for tackling and resolving other, much more comprehensive and genuine, disarmament measures.

At the same time, we should like to emphasize the importance of the multilateral approach in dealing with disarmament issues. Since the risks and dangers of maintaining weapon arsenals at their current levels are shared equally by all the members of the international community, it should be clearly accepted as justifiable that there must be a shared responsibility and duty to define and formulate the process necessary for contributing to the total elimination of these risks and dangers. The artificial distinction often drawn by some between bilateral and multilateral diplomcy, placing emphasis on the first as the venue most conducive to attaining concrete progress, cannot be sustained. We believe that differences of this nature will recede once the foundations of the new international order solidify, bringing about a re-evaluation of still habitual though already outdated theories concerning the maintenance of international peace and security.

Egypt has great faith in the value of pursuing the goals of disarmament within the framework of the United Nations, as enshrined in the Charter and reaffirmed over the years. We realize that if any meaningful progress is to be made, the political will and sincerity of commitment of all members to our common objective are indispensable.

In addressing the substantive issues that will be discussed during this session of the Disarmament Commission, I should like to make reference to our long-standing belief that while priorities exist within the disarmament agenda, there is an interrelationship between the various elements of that agenda, each complementing the other. Progress in one area will most definitely facilitate the possibilities of fulfilment of the objectives in other areas. We believe this holds true of the four agenda items now under consideration.

(Mr. Moussa, Egypt)

On the first substantive item, entitled "Objective information on military matters", we are all aware of the outcome of the deliberations that took place during last year's session. We appreciate that there is a divergence of views between delegations concerning this issue. This requires additional efforts to bridge the gaps that exist in this area.

As for the second item, entitled "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons", I must first of all take this opportunity to convey to all delegations my gratitude for the confidence they have placed in me as the representative of my country by entrusting me with the chairmanship of the subsidiary body dealing with this item. I shall certainly spare no effort to ensure that the deliberations on the item are conducted in a constructive manner, based on respect and mutual understanding and providing ample opportunity for all delegations to express their opinions on the issue fully.

Egypt, as we have reiterated on every occasion, is convinced that nuclear disarmament must remain the highest priority on the international disarmament agenda. It remains our intention to pursue the ultimate goal of the elimination of the nuclear-arms threat that still weighs on the very existence of humanity. I have referred previously to the positive climate in international affairs which has been witnessed recently and which has given rise to substantial progress in this respect. We can only hope that the new spirit of coexistence will have a positive reflection on our deliberations, allowing wider strides to be taken within this multilateral forum, in response to the appeals of the large majority of delegations, and thereby providing tangible progress towards the consolidation of international peace and security in the broadest sense.

(Mr. Moussa, Egypt)

Egypt continues to support the non-proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of disarmament efforts aimed towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. The Treaty, in our view, has had a significant effect in contributing towards the maintenance of international peace and security. Despite this, it remains a matter of vital concern to us that the Treaty still lacks global adherence, which thereby detracts from its main objective. Though it is accepted that the Treaty has achieved to date some considerable success in the field of horizontal proliferation, the same cannot be said concerning vertical proliferation. An unprecedented opportunity currently exists to offset this imbalance, by virtue of the new spirit of coexistence dominating international relations. It is in the interest of the international community in general and the nuclear-weapon States in particular not to squander this opportunity but, rather, to build on recent achievements by intensifying their efforts to negotiate effective measures of nuclear disarmament. The need also exists to strengthen the non-proliferation regime through the establishment of reliable security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States, the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, and substantial reductions in the stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

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These, along with other specific actions in this direction, will certainly contribute positively towards achieving the broad objectives of the Treaty - namely, the cessation of the nuclear arms race and making general and complete disarmament possible thereby.

Concerning the third item on our agenda, entitled "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security", the interest with which Egypt has consistently addressed this vital issue is most apparent. The interrelationship between international and regional peace, stability and security is self-evident, and we note with satisfaction recent positive developments in international relations, which have most definitely contributed to the reduction of tension in various regional hotbeds of dispute, despite some exceptions, which I noted earlier.

In awareness of this fact, Egypt has taken the initiative in proposing regional disarmament measures such as the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in supporting the denuclearization of Africa and in supporting the initiative declaring the Middle East a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction.

All these initiatives are directed towards the goal of stemming the escalation of the crisis still gripping the Middle East region through specific measures in the field of disarmament that would involve all States in the region without exception, and would without a doubt meet the security concerns of all in an equitable and just manner; in this way, one of the major sources of friction and confrontation in the world would be eliminated, and the way would be opened for greater emphasis to be placed on finding means to consolidate the prosperity of all the peoples in our region.

Finally, I wish to refer to the fourth item on our agenda, which was described by the previous speaker, the representative of Austria, as a

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forward-looking and future-oriented item - the role of science and technology in the context of international security. Any serious attempt towards disarmament must incorporate the necessary verification mechanisms to ensure compliance with, and adherence to, the provisions of the treaties which are to be agreed on in this context. The enormous achievments we are witnessing in the area of scientific progress, which continues to move forward in leaps and bounds, increase the likelihood that these necessary mechanisms can offer an acceptable degree of confidence for all States as they embark on implementing the objective of complete, total disarmament.

For this reason, we are eager to see a substantial increase in the transfer of the relevant technology and in constructive cooperation to further develop the means to ensure that the verification process is successful. As we saw during the recently concluded amendment conference of the partial test-ban Treaty, the divergence of views concerning the ability of current scientific developments to verify a comprehensive test-ban treaty contributed to the somewhat disappointing outcome to the conference.

One of the negative aspects of the revolution in scientific exploration in the past 50 years has been the creation of nuclear weapons. It seems only fit today that the scientific resources now at hand should be used to rectify this situation.

The delegation of Egypt looks forward to the commencement of the substantive deliberations on some of the items to which I have referred. We place great value on the work of the Disarmament Commission, and hope that, through cooperation, good faith and, Mr. Chairman, your experienced guidance, all delegations may strive together in harmony to bridge the gaps between differing views for the sake of a more secure and stable world.

Mr. AYALA LASSO (Ecuador) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, I wish you every success as you conduct the work of the Disarmament Commission this session. The outstanding role that your country has always played in disarmament matters and your own qualifications and personal experience justify my anticipating a fruitful outcome to our work under your chairmanship.

I also wish to thank our distinguished colleague, the Ambassador of Indonesia, for the effective and dynamic work he carried out last year as Chairman of our Commission.

As a number of our colleagues have pointed out, the Commission is beginning a new era in its work. In the life cycles of human institutions, there must be continuous renewal if the stagnation which usually results from mere repetition is to be avoided. The methods the Commission recently adopted have enabled it to reshape its agenda, and hence to tackle new subjects and focus on other facets of the disarmament issue, so enhancing its ability to act creatively.

The world has just emerged from a situation, critical for peace and security, whose results must be studied carefully by the community of nations. In the disarmament field, the Gulf crisis taught us a great deal, and its lessons must be emphasized and absorbed. Firstly, it enabled us to see that transfers of sophisticated and significant military hardware occasioned by political and geostrategic considerations offer no guarantees as to what uses may be made of it in future. Alliances have shown themselves to be ephemeral, open to revision in the light of the historical circumstances of the moment. Secondly, the crisis allowed us to appreciate the high level of sophistication military hardware has reached and how important it is in waging war, a fact that will most certainly influence States' arms purchases in future. We can conclude that it is obvious that no progress in disarmament can be made

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withouc considering the production and transfer of arms and high technology for military purposes and deciding what to do about them. Thirdly, the crisis in the Gulf has taught us that disarmament, as an objective for the international community and as a sine qua non for genuine peace and lasting security, must continue to be one of the highest priorities in the work of the United Nations and an ideal to which our Commission must dedicate its greatest efforts.

The Ecuadorian delegation, last year, during the last session, followed with great interest the exchange of ideas on the subject of objective information on military matters. The positive experiences which some nations have had in this area allow us to say that the dissemination of a military information system or systems at regional and world-wide levels would contribute to increased and improved levels of confidence and understanding between States. Of course, in this area where, according to some States, there are many sensitive points in the matter of security and also serious reasons for it, the necessary regional focus on the issue must be taken into account, as should the fact that the interested parties from a region should participate in reaching any agreements which may arise with regard to the exchange of military information.

In this respect, the Disarmament Commission ought perhaps to consider preparing a number of general elements which might serve as models for regional and subregional military information exchange schemes.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the exchange of military information is not per se an objective of the work of disarmament. Leaving to one side the discussion as to whether this is a matter which has more to do with confidence-building measures, I believe that we cannot treat it in isolation from other phenomena such as regional disarmament and controlling certain types of weapons.

(Mr. Ayala Lasso, Ecuador)

For developing countries, the regional approach to disarmament, within the context of worldwide security, is particularly important. My delegation does not believe that regional approaches to disarmament must entirely depend on the world geostrategic position, in so far as negotiations or progress are concerned. Of course, international circumstances do influence regional disarmament, but we believe that it is possible to identify certain aspects of regional disarmament problems that are locally autonomous and can be viewed independently of international factors. For example, confidence-building measures at the regional level, the regulation of the acquisition of certain types of weapons, an agreed reduction of troop strength, or the creation of zones free from certain types of weapons in a given region would constitute a question that can be tackled at the regional level quite apart from the prevailing international geostrategic, or political situations.

The worldwide technological revolution has seen enormous efforts made and resources spent on weaponry. Recent events have shown that technology influences the creation and execution of new military doctrines. The use of high-technology resources in the arsenals of the most powerful countries represents immense investments and financial burdens. The dissemination of high-technology weapons may lead to a renewed arms race which, at the conventional level, could complicate regional and international security, not to mention its negative impact on countries less well endowed with economic resources, which could be drawn into a competition to acquire high-cost, sophisticated weapons.

On the other hand, the development of science and technology is an irreversible trend in today's world. The application of technological knowledge to the field of war and the development of science on the basis of

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military research are also matters that cannot be denied. It is thus a challenge to the international community to determine what consequences can derive from those realities. Attention should be paid not just to speeches or the declaration of practical objectives but also, and especially, to the machinery and practical ways and means for transferring technological advances from the military to the civilian field in a timely fashion. There must also be a discussion of ways and means and an exchange of experience with regard to the productive civilian use of military techniques that exist today.

The goal of eliminating weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, from the world remains an aspiration of all humanity. Regrettably, we cannot assume that those weapons will never be used, since they are part of the arsenals of certain nations and there is a tendency to produce and sell such in ever greater quantities, notwithstanding the appeals of the international community and the demands of world public opinion.

Today's political circumstances certainly require us to take another look at the basic premises underlying our discussion of the subject. Encouraging achievements resulting from talks between the two major Powers are an inducement to pursue the process without flagging. In the Disarmament Commission's agenda, reference is made to this subject and to the process that should be followed in order to achieve the objective of eliminating nuclear weapons. We are well aware of the positions of those who hold that nuclear disarmament must be arranged between the Powers concerned, but as this is a problem that concerns all countries, we believe that each one has a role to play. A similar thought would apply to the United Nations, which has a very long record of considering these subjects. Complex political issues generally can be resolved through a process in which there may be high points and low

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points, lasting for years and requiring a body of solutions based on a special approach to each aspect of the problem involved.

Finding an appropriate role for the United Nations and for all States in the process of nuclear disarmament requires much more than mere declarations of censure or well-intentioned principles; it requires commitment and pragmatic solutions in order not to worsen the problem. For example, the non-proliferation Treaty must be extended, and we must enhance the understanding that this matter cannot be resolved so long as there remain dangers or circumstances indicating that such modern nuclear weapons could be used.

The delegation of Ecuador believes that the new methods that will now guide the Commission's efforts must be exploited, so as to ensure that our work will be fruitful. We should like to be optimistic in that respect. However, we must recognize that no working methods will automatically lead to achievements, nor can they replace the political will of States. For that reason, we express the hope that these two factors will complement each other in the best possible way, enabling the Commission to achieve its objectives in the most effective manner in the course of this year.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.